

APPEARED
ON PAGE A48.

WASHINGTON POST
11 december 1986

Angola Says It Captured Rebels' U.S.-Made Missiles

By David B. Ottaway

Washington Post Staff Writer

The Marxist Angolan government has captured "at least three" U.S.-made Stinger anti-aircraft missiles provided earlier this year by the Central Intelligence Agency to the rebel forces of Jonas Savimbi, according to Manuel Pedro Pacavira, Angola's ambassador to Cuba.

The missiles were seized during an offensive by Angolan armed forces in late July against Savimbi's home town of Munhango in eastern Angola, Pacavira said.

There was no immediate independent confirmation of the report. However, Jardo Mwekalia, a spokesman here for Savimbi's group, said the Angolan claim was "completely false. There is no foundation for something like that."

Pacavira said Cubans and Soviets providing military assistance to the Angolan army "quite naturally" had access to the Stingers.

A source familiar with the covert U.S. government program also denied the report and said the Stingers provided to Savimbi's guerrilla forces were an early model of the weapon about which the Soviets already had obtained information and had copied in developing their SA14.

Pacavira said he did not know what the Angolan troops had done with the captured Stingers or whether they had used them in combat against South African aircraft that periodically intrude into southern Angola. He said he had heard about the capture of the Stingers while home in Luanda last August.

Based in Havana, Pacavira said he was here for a World Peace Foundation conference late last month on Angola and Mozambique. He said he has no plans to meet with U.S. officials.

But he said his government maintains an "open door" for resumption of talks with the U.S. government about Angola and neighboring South African-administered Namibia.

Angola has rejected, however, linkage between withdrawal of the 35,000 Cuban troops stationed there and the question of Namibia independence, both of which the Reagan administration is seeking to negotiate with South Africa and Angola.

Pacavira also said that, because of Savimbi's "crimes" against the Angolan people, the Luanda government rejected a U.S. demand that it open talks with the rebel leader.

"There is no possible negotiations with Savimbi because he can offer us nothing," Pacavira said.